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SUBJECT: UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TURNS TO SPORTS

¶1. The UN General Assembly on October 19 called upon all Member States to cooperate in efforts to use sport as a tool for peace, to proclaim the Olympic Truce during the Olympic Winter Games (Vancouver, 2010), and welcomed the historic holding of soccer's World Cup for the first time in Africa (South Africa, 2010). It adopted by consensus two resolutions, "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal" (A/64/L.2) and "2010 International Federation of Association Football World Cup event" (A/64/L.3). They each reached a large number of co-sponsors (150 and 110 respectively), including the United States. For webcast see (http://webast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/ga/64/2_009/ga091019pm-orig.rim). For UN press summary see (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2009/ga10872.doc.htm>).

¶2. The first draft resolution A/64/L.2 proclaimed the Olympic Truce for the XXI Olympic Winter Games and the X Paralympic Winter Games (Vancouver, 2010). The text called on the Secretary-General to promote observance of the Olympic Truce and it called on States to cooperate with the Olympic Movement in efforts to use sport to promote peace and reconciliation in conflict areas. "These Games are not just about 27 days of sport, but also about the privileged opportunity to inspire a generation", said John Furlong, Chief Executive Officer of the Vancouver Organizing Committee. The text captured key elements from past resolutions, including recognition of sport's growing role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

¶3. In the ensuing debate, Greece highlighted that the promotion of peace was, in fact, the actual reason the Olympic Games had been established, and that the Truce had been upheld for over 1300 years, making it the longest peace treaty in history. The Truce was revived in 1994 to call for the safe passage and participation of all at the Olympic Games. Greece believed that the Truce had become an expression of mankind's desire to build a world based on the rules of fair competition, civility, reconciliation and tolerance.

¶4. Also speaking were Prince Albert II of Monaco as head of state and as a member of the International Olympic Committee, NAME, India's Minister of State for External Affairs; China, Cuba, Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, and the United States.

¶5. The Assembly adopted, also by consensus, a resolution on the "2010 International Federation of Association Football World Cup event", by which it welcomed the historic hosting of the 2010 International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) World Cup in South Africa, the first time a major sport event of this scale would be held in Africa. By that text, the Assembly emphasized the role of sport in promoting peace, solidarity and socio-economic development, and encouraged States to support sport as a means to promote peace and development. It also encouraged Governments to support the 2010 World Cup, including through stimulating popular attendance.

¶6. Introducing that resolution, South Africa said the World

Cup 2010 created an opportunity -- "so important in our troubled universe" -- for all to experience the reality that they belonged to one family, regardless of race, color, gender, age, or religious belief. Recalling that the United Nations had stood with South Africa during the dark days of apartheid, he said the resolution presented the Assembly with another opportunity to offer support, as the text's objectives resonated with the United Nations' three pillars of peace, development and human rights.

¶7. See <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/2009/130727.htm> for the statement by the Honorable Wellington Webb, Senior Advisor to the Permanent Representative of the United States to the Sixty-Fourth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, on Agenda Item 46: "Building a better and more peaceful world through sport and the Olympic ideal", in the Plenary of the General Assembly, October 19, 2009.
Wolff